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#### THE EXPERIENCE

A college education is like the mirror of a great telescope not fabricated in one piece but a composite of many mirrors each adding its share to the depth and color and clarity of the final image, so that he who observes, whether by eye, or film, or tape, may, by the contemplation of that scene, come to reflect upon the meaning and purpose of this life and world, the magnificent beauty of that which now surrounds us, and the awesome vastness of that which we do not yet understand.

-Charles L. Wood

#### BECOMING

Confusion caresses me Bringing unrelenting emotions I cannot control what I feel.

Light somehow enters As much as I don't expect it And a brighter image fills my soul.

And I wait for inner Peace
To relieve my burning insides
Wanting my instability to become control.

-Jana Leigh Chovanec

#### A DREAM OF PASSION

But for the tantalizing touch of a memory I could shed this dying skin and breathe free

I'd whisper, tears of furious passion and drown the satin touch of dreams

to feel the breath of a moonbeam's light as I walked the dewdrops in skyclad attire

tasting the mist of breathing tree I'd weep for fear of waking.

-James T. Staton

#### SEARCHLIGHT

Tell me the truth, I can take it no need to squirm under the pressure ugly sounds of night make the city feel alive, pulsing stinking like a giant diseased toad I think it wants to eat you but you can keep it down just let the words come falling from your mouth. Hiding in your blanket of dirty accusations won't keep that searchlight shadow off the alley wall broadcast your fears like shadows on the wall. Don't try to aim for eloquence I'd settle for relevance any sign of intelligence would be a welcome change. Just admit that you're hiding like some kind of frightened rabbit come out and face the world, it's ok I know it seems awfully big and strange, but Hell is not a church-school lesson or a place for someone else besides you Hell is the sum of all your fears compressed down into something more correct to talk about.

---Aaron Wells



#### LOVES KNIGHT

Armored by love like spring sunlight a knight views this dark field of pain. He brings forth his love here to conquer, the Snow Queen, her heart for to claim.

His mount on this field's made of passion, crafted of love's gentle flower.

A knight comes to challenge the Snow Queen, to capture her heart with his power.

No sword, knife, or shield, is he holding, only love's warmth to cover his breast. His life now is hers for taking, for without her he can find no rest.

To fight for the strength in a feeling, to burn down with truth her charade, Love's knight for no glory but passion, rides on this righteous crusade

Armored with love like spring sunshine, ennobled by love's bright desire. Not once does this knight doubt his calling, in his breast burns a raging bonfire.

He'll thaw her heart with his longing, and tear down the walls of her lair. With smoldering desire to guide him, this and much more will he dare.

He charges her steed made of horror, and forces its power to fade. She blocks with a shield made of sorrow slashing with eyes a sharp blade. He caresses her shield made of anguish, leaving sweet solace instead, She's fettered by rime still refusing, where he would have her heart lead.

Armored by love like spring sunlight, brimming with passions bright glow, Loves knight endeavors to show her, that only with love can she grow.

The Snow Queen retreats to her fortress, enclosing her heart in its frost. He sits on her doorstep attempting, to make her aware of the cost.

He tears down the walls that surround her, thus flooding the darkness with light. She sees the truth bared before her, and the winter's cold chill takes flight.

The Knight is encased in his passion, his darling he's freed from despair. Now spring has vanquished the winter, and Love's Queen is his lady fair.

---James T. Staton





#### WHAT I SEE

I see the world as a dark place

I see that man wears the masks that society dictates he wear

I see man destroys man for the betterment of man

I see happiness that covers the sadness

I see the brave cowering to fear

I see the blind but can the blind see me

I see knowledge to help man, hurt man

I see satan in every man, not god

I see god is playdough to be shaped as man wishes

I see history repeating for we have learned nothing

I see in trying to master all man has yet to master himself

I see man controlling man

I see wrong for what is right

I see love that hides, pain

I see the man who knows but does not know

I see nature is free, and that man will never be

I see anger

I see hate

I see war

I see death

I see hell, it is my world. . . for my world is the night.

-Jesse Battle

#### WEDNESDAY CHILD

Wednesday child is full of grace.

How I love to feel her warm embrace.

Her smile lifts my spirit higher than the clouds,
and it shines brighter than the sun.

She never gives a single complaint when we have to do without.

She simply says, "I don't care. I will be fine."

I never thought that I would find such a kindred spirit in this child of mine.

Life without my Wednesday child would be no life at all. If a hundred years I should live, I hope that she will always be by my side.

Born on a Wednesday night, so small and yet bigger than life.

God bless my Wednesday child!

-Melanie Layton

#### THE BEST PART OF ME

I stopped at a pond and there was vague light with the sounds of summer and nature at my feet like faded pictures of time

and nature at my feet like faded pictures of time standing at the water's edge, I take a breathe and jump bliss with innocence on a cool summer night down south 4 o'clock shadows paint on a canvas of a green field just past the dirt road I found a piece of myself again, the best piece of me, a piece of my youth.

-James Wright

#### NOT LONG FORGOTTEN

I close my eyes
And turn to you with a whisper,
"I love you."
I turn back to open my eyes.
For I know it is only your memory
sitting next to me.
Your soul has long since left.
Your fingers have long since slipped
from their embrace with mine.
Your body rests with another tonight.
Mine has long since been clothed.
The sweet scent of your passion lingers.
The wet of your lips still wets mine.
All that is missing —is your. . .
Is you.

-Patricia Ward Smith

#### LOVE

Love is in your heart and in your soul, It's worth a whole lot more than gold

Love is sometimes happy and sometimes sad, it's really not all that bad.

Love is trusting and believing in each other, if not, ask mother.

—Tiffany Hardie

#### TORN PICTURE

She always keeps the lens full of smiles and delightful grin.

The fear of her controlling words keep them gathered for her sin.

The endless sea of agony floats on her words of pain And soon the happy actors have found another stage. She scorns them as they separate and yet another picture tears.

Her eyes fill with sorrow and her mind with vengeful hate,

But her mouth begins to crack a smile as another takes the bait.

The camera lens once again is full, the actors all in place as the cycle starts itself once more, but at a slightly heightened pace.

In the end the wicked smile stands alone beside a torn embrace

the final cast departed—just death to take its place.

-Erik Boisen



#### UNTITLED

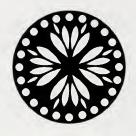
How could you call yourself a man? When all you have done is put down your woman? Oh, please! Don't even come talkin' dat wack nonsense. I have hardly got da patience. Go back under da rock whence you came from. And if you try to call all you'll hear is the phone's hum. At the rate which my emotions are flowin', If I were you I'd be rollin'. It'll take only one shot gun blast. And wit dat weak heart of yours, I don't think you'll last. Somewhere along the line someone has been lying to you, And those lies have poisoned your mind Like a bad case of da flu. But au contraire mon frere! I AM A REAL WOMAN! And you have yet to be a man.

-Lillian Dixon

### NO SCREAMING

Darkness embracing
Holding, capturing
Violence dawning
Grinding, stabbing
Hate smothering
Taking, consuming
Words silencing
Catching, choking
No Screaming

--Jennifer Gold



#### PARTING IN STYLE

Time is the fluttering of the tongue, and the flickering of the eyes—

As my love wrestles with the captor.

Love is not a feeling,

or an emotion—
or a moment when eyes meet
and eyelids cease
from blinking
for a day or so.

Love is not—when

the phone rings on-and on.

And the echoes of the doorbell seep into the walls. . . time and time—and time again.

Love is not—

when my love is turning away

Running down the empty street—from me.

And the circle of love still bounces at my feet.

—Patricia Ward Smith

#### LOVE PROBLEMS

What is the problem with loving me?

What is the problem with us spending a little time together?

What is the problem with me being yours and not the girl next door's?

What is the problem?

What is the problem with committing to me, not as friends but as two people in love are supposed to be?

Have I done you wrong, maybe in some way I don't know of?

I wish you would tell me!

Please, just let me know!

My heart is aching bad.

Everyday I smile and yet feel so sad.

You say you want only to be friends, but what other choice do I have without losing my lover, my confidant,

and my best friend.

I guess the only thing left to do is accept it, and look at you each day expecting.

You will love me and can love me unconditionally. If you open up your heart, mind, and soul and let love take control.

In my heart I know it will never be.

You'll never want me to be yours, because as you say there are too many problems.

I guess it's problems that I can't see because your love has taken residence over me.

-Tovon Hamilton

#### HAND OF FAITH: LOSING SANITY

Boredom racks the brain. Killing the soul. Pulling one into the den of the incompetent, the negligent, the uncareful, and the unwantful. Boredom clears the mind, creating obstacles out of necessity, paths out of desire. Boredom pulls you in. Reels you within your body. It confuses you, hurts you, and perhaps, ultimately, destroys you. Boredom is an eternal well, that sucks you in, leaving an empty shell, A once intelligent mind. A once fruitious body. A once holy soul. Boredom leaves you empty. Until. there is nothing left, except, emptiness, eternal depths of mystique, and confusion.

—Lydia Fontenelle

#### I SHAKE

In a room filled with emotions and people I sit in a dark corner with the shadows that seem to haunt me. In solitude I find security. I shake as she looks behind the shadows as to cut the darkness she lifts me from the ugly happiness I so loved I shake cause what's being revealed is why I hid and I hide trying to conceal the green-eyed monster that lurks deep inside as we battle I shake for the future is unknown but I know it's growing near. My heart never felt so much as emotions so pure flood my body the world pulling at us in two seperate directions I shake

The future is so clearly unseen, locked away in time before anyone gets there. Assumption of the future is the disappointment and pain you create for yourself.

-William S. Crews

#### VANITY

Was it all in vain
That I let myself go?
I don't want to be part of the game
Yet I am.

There's no escaping the unending battle to gain control Which doesn't exist.

I was foolish enough once to believe in the Beauty which surrounded me.

Through the darkness I see it now
Glimmering only faintly
I bring harm to myself with my thoughts
Inhibitions fly on
Not allowing the Freedom I seek
I expect more from my lovers than to cloud my
external vision

Maul my heart Shape it into unbearable shapes That scream for release Not received.

-Jana Leigh Chovanec



#### REAL

My dissatisfaction with my world
Only adds to my inadequate approach to the reality
I seek

Which is not the reality I feel.

Oppression from formal institutional beauacracy

Spreads its decrepit disease into crevices of

innocent minds

Laid to hatch at inopportune times.

The intensity of knowledge gained

Compares little to hard lessons taught on
unspeakable journeys

Which confuse the unstable dreams of someone who searches the "truths"

To uncover the underlying beauty
Only hoping to see there is beauty left.
In the harsh bleakness that withstands all
longing intentions

When starting again strips the soul
And inhibitions are so deeply imbedded
The power needed to flush out the troubled
Springs from hiding to overcome the nonsense
To decide what is real
And who reality lies with.

-Jana Leigh Chovanec

#### VISIONS OF SPRINGTIME

Splashes of sunlight and shadows
paint a myriad of images over the land
Songs of the locust, woodpecker,
finch and crow sound the call for a mate
The streams echo the joy of Mother Nature
with rippling and bubbling, much like laughter
Clouds cast their figures in the sky
and pass, allowing others the same privilege
Trees rustle in the breeze, waving
inviting you to come, share the tranquility
Flitting butterflies and buzzing bees
dart about

Young blossoms seem to wink at the world as they display a collage of shapes and colors

The growth and smell of fresh moss adds to the feeling of new life and vitality of the season

Small hoof and paw prints along the streams hint at others adding to the newness of spring
Visions of springtime demand of the world to stop, if only for an instant and partake in its unfolding.

-Marshall Burke



#### The 'YARD SALE'

- Memories tucked away suddenly spring up,
  "Oh my God, I'd forgotten all about that."
- Visions of childhood—past romances—another yard sale, drift across the cinemascope of the mind.
- Gifts of great value, when given, now go for 50 cents dust rags and paint clothes emerge from lost fashions.
- A bicycle seat salvaged from a rusted heap, Happy Meal toys are given to brighten a child's morning.
- "How much for this? Will you take \$2" "How about \$3, it's practically new!?!" "I'm not sure, let me think on it."
- "It's so hard to part with this, I think I'll keep this for awhile."
- "God, I hope someone buys that ugly thing!!"
  Piece by piece the puzzle of who we were is sent into
  the future.
  - Do those buying realize the history they have obtained?!?
- The books, games, music and art are mirrors of our soul.

  The clothes & shoes tell what we showed the world.
- Is it 'JUNK' we sell, or is it ourselves?

  Do we gain or lose at the 'YARD SALE' ??!!?

---Marshall Burke

#### OLD BONES

I love you, Old Bones, you have served me well And now the aches I feel remind me of my antics Your frailty is frightening to me, as we age together.

There are still so many trails to walk and mountains to climb

I rely on you for guidance and stability so I won't falter You rely on me for patience and nutrition to keep you strong

OH! The paths we have wandered, the trees we climbed, the bruises we have tended to, we were great, you and I Forgive me, Old Bones, for the pain I have caused us

How sad it is to see us withering away to dust My dreams are full of adventure and beautiful meadows Carry me to my dreams, Old Bones, and I will be kind to you

Let us cast a tall shadow once more before we are gone Let us ford a mountain stream, let us skip down a dusty road Let us, Old Bones. . . Let us. . . .

---Marshall Burke

#### LET ME DIE

If my mind is gone—Let me die,
If my life has been full—Let me die,
If my body has been ravaged by disease—Let me die,
If I have enjoyed all of life's benefits—Let me die,
If I have seen my children and grandchildren grow—
Let me die,

If my wishes are not to prolong my life with artificial means—Let me die

Let me die with dignity and with comfort—free of pain, As surely as all of life will cease, Let me die with peace.

-S. B. Wilson





#### SILENT VOICES

Tired I am, sick I am, pity I feel for those who control me. For those who say when I go, where I go, and what I must do when I get there. Why is it like this? That I don't know, for I think it has always been like this. I know for as long as I have been here it has. Excuse me, I am sorry for not introducing myself, my name is Nine. And that you must hear my ranting and raving, but it is time and I must be heard. Now tell me, how would you feel to be controlled by another, to do his bidding then thrown away like trash. To have the world hate you for being who you are. To hear the stories of your forefathers and all the good that they did, only to be crushed by the stories of how bad you are now. To hear the same people that reap the benefits of the pain that my forefathers went through, scream, destroy them all. The world would be a better place without them. How how would you feel, would you not be angry, sure you would, and so am I. What makes me angry is not that I know, it is that I cannot say anything about it. My voice is never heard, nobody asks me do I want to do it, or should I do it. But I am forever blamed when it is done. I am the scapegoat for the mistake, I am the scapegoat for the well thought-out plan. In the eyes of the world I am evil incarnate. I am the wrong, never the right. I look at my brother three-two, who is now no more than a blubbering idiot after his last outing. From the stories that I have heard it was the execution of an old man. But to the world there is nobody to blame but him being who he is, now is that right, I don't think so and me and my brothers are here to stand up and be heard. My brothers, twenty-two, Luger, Uzi, 12 gauge, 45 cal, and me Nine Millimeter are here to tell you that we are not the blame for the world being the way it is. And if you must find blame, look deep within yourselves, for the blame lies in the heart of Man.



# SHORT FICTION

# ed Dr

#### SLEEPING BEAUTY

As I drove to him that night, I thought of all the times I had traveled this lonely road. I really hated this road. The silence of country roads had always irked me. At this moment, I wanted the hideous sounds of the city. I yearned for the bright headlights that streak down the highway. Why was I driving to see him? I had asked myself this question too many times to answer it. I was recalling the first time I had been to Eric's house. We had driven on these same old roads in his little, red sports car. We were drinking beer out of a can and driving 90 miles per hour, but I wasn't scared. I had felt alive that day! Now, I felt confused.

I wondered what he would do when I knocked on his window. I knew he would be home. I always knew. It was nights like these that I dreaded. Earlier, I had been sitting quite contentedly at my favorite barstool. Old friends had been buying me drinks. After the bourbon hit, the gnawing began. It was like the hunger pains of a man that has not eaten in days. It was the feeling of withdrawl that only a lifetime junkie knows. In some dark place in my soul, I needed him. Or so I thought.

Peering through the window, I saw his silhouette. The full moon shown straight through the window, radiating his motionless body. I saw a hint of smile spread across his lips. He was dreaming. I wanted to leap into the depths

of his mind and discover his thoughts. Was he dreaming of a new lover? Was he dreaming of the night we met? I would never know. All I had was a heavy heart and a bad taste in my mouth. I could not knock. I could not speak. I could not move. I must have stood there silent for hours. While the moon lit up the night, I stared into the darkness at a man I no longer knew. The memories flooded my thoughts. Passionate kisses and heartfelt embraces we had once shared. I thought about the Autumn afternoon that we made love under the willow tree in his front yard. We had lain naked in the grass while a fall breeze stroked the chords of the wind chimes hanging from the front porch. I think I fell in love with him that day. In my dreams, I reached for him. I wanted to scream his name in agony, but I stood in silence. He was not mine anymore.

Two years ago that night, I had sat at the very barstool I had visited earlier. The band played a sappy love song. I was drinking fast, trying to ignore the lyrics. I smelled him before I saw him. His cologne enticed my deadened senses. I turned my head to see the man I would fall in love with. He gave me a sly smile and the wink of an eye. I bought him a drink and took him home.

Now I stood outside his window, watching him sleep in the bed we once shared. I realized that after all this wasted time that I did not care anymore. Our time had passed. We could not go on from here. I cried there outside his window, crouched in a ball like a little girl. I sobbed, in fact, for all the moments we had shared, together. There had been so many bad, miserable days. But, the nights were always full of love. I knew it was a memory. He had been a dream like so many others I'd had. Reality awoke me and the dream had faded. I smoked a cigarette and choked back my mournful tears.

"Good-bye, love, it was nice knowing you," I whispered to the window. I kissed the window and my lips left an imprint. I got in to my car and sped off into the night. I would never lay my eyes on Eric again.

On a chilly, November evening, I was walking down Newberry Street dying for a cup of coffee. I was looking down at the sidewalk, making sure my feet did not touch the cracks between the concrete. I heard someone call my name. After living in the city for over a year, I had become used to ignoring the sound of my name. No one was ever addressing me. For some unknown reason, I looked up. A tall, wiry man stood before me with a big grin spreading across his face. It was Barry Vandali, Eric's childhood friend. I could not believe the coincidence! I never ran into anyone familiar in the city. He ran up to me and we embraced in a long, comforting hug.

"Wow," he said, "it had been two years since I saw you. Mimi, you look fantastic! I heard you were in Boston, but I cannot believe running into you like this. I tried to get in touch with you about the funeral, but you aren't listed in the phone book." I was dumbfounded, unable to respond.

"Well, I uh, um had some uh trouble with prank callers. Wait, what funeral? Barry, who died?" I knew the dreaded reply. I didn't even want to hear Barry utter the words. His mournful expression held the obvious truth.

"I'm sorry," Barry whispered. "Eric killed himself in a drunk driving accident two months ago. I thought someone had contacted you. Mimi, don't go! Please come back and talk to me! C'mon Mimi, lets get a cup of coffee or something!" I was already fifty feet away. His loud voice trailing off into the mass of chaos and confusion that was all around us. I couldn't talk about the news of Eric's death with Barry. I just had to keep walking. Walking down the street, jogging two blocks to my apartment building, running up the stairs, unlocking my door, and escaping into the safety of my apartment. I was wound up and exhausted in the same moment. I sat on my bed to relax and let Barry's words sink in. Eric had been dead to

me for a long time. I was glad I had said good-bye, if not in words, at least in my heart. Now, Eric would remain forever my sleeping beauty.

-Emily Rutter



#### HATCHET RIDE

I awoke to the bright flash of brake lights and the nauseating smell of exhaust. The chill of the cold metal I was resting on numbed my trembling and battered body. I was not bound by rope, but by pain. For my ribs and spine filled with stinging pain at any attempt to move. The old car's rhythmic bouncing along the rough road almost lulled me back to an unconsciousness state that I would surely never leave. As the road got rougher, I noticed the trunk fill with a haze of dust from the gravel that passed beneath. The car accelerated a little just before the impact. I refused the narcotic affects of my pain as my body hurled against the hard sharp springs of the back seat and fell once again onto the cold steel bottom of the trunk. I heard his seatbelt unbuckle as his door creaked open. I heard the heavy sloshing of liquid in a metal container and I smelled the vapors of the gasoline as it was dumped onto the car. I know he thought I was dead and that this killer was just methodically working to kill clues. I expected flames, but none came. I slowly reached into my front pocket for my

small pocketknife. This little tool represented my only means to get the trunk lock open. I felt the lock with my hand to figure its workings. Darkness prevented me from seeing much of anything. Moving the small knife blade into what I had determined to be the best place. I twisted the small handle and heard the lock spring open. Knowing what may be out there, I hesitated in pushing the trunk lid open. In fact, I pulled the lid down so it would appear shut. with just enough pressure to keep it from locking again. I heard a motorcycle start and then race by. I heard and smelled the flames as they began to consume the car, but I waited. The motorcycle was still audible and although I believe he was traveling forward of the car and unable to see the trunk, I waited. For if he saw me, I could offer no defense. So I waited. Smoke and heat filled the compartment until I could wait no longer. After pushing the lid up with all the force I could summon, I pulled myself out over the back bumper and dropped to the ground. I moved away from the flaming mass dragging myself in a sort of crawl through the moist, muddy gravel. I kept moving until I was clear of the blaze. Propped up against a huge broken chunk of concrete wall, I gazed out to find the man on the motorcycle, but he was gone. I hoped for someone to see the flames and guide me from my end, but no one came. As I left, I could not help but smile as I moved along protected by my cloak of death and strong will to live on.

#### -Erik Boisen



#### ONE DAY

One day I will leave this crime infested area; one day I will take my children away from the drugs and violence. As I lower my head, I pray that one day I will be able to escape the hole. If by chance you are wondering, the hole is where I live. A city housing project that offers no hope once you've fallen in, and fallen in, I have done. With three children at 28 years of age it's a place I may never leave. No, I can't think like that. One day I will leave. "Mom," I hear my son calling me from the front of the house. "I'll be right there," I say in a low voice as not to wake up the baby. When I walk into the living room I look at the house, my house which I try to clean but it's a task that I will never be able to complete. I have lived in this house of no hope for the last 9 years, and I have done everything I can to it. Yet the sofa and loveseat, which is all I have, is soiled and worn, the rugs are filthy, the walls dingy with dirt. But worst of all is the bugs, the bugs that I can't get rid of. The three apartments above me and the two beside me are infested. They come out and spray every six months, but must spray happy juice for the bugs love it. This is my hell, my punishment for being a failure in life. "Mom," my son's voice snaps me back, away from my nightmare, back into my nightmare. I can't answer him, all I can do is stare. At 13 he is already the striking image of his father. A father he will only know in memories. A father who will most likely die in prison for I think that's what life without parole means. You're going crazy mom," I hear him say as he walks out the door. The sad part about it is, he may be right, for I think I am going crazy. "Mom, mom," I hear the voice and turn to my daughter. My lovely little girl who is just now starting to see life as it is. At 7 years old she is now starting to see the failure that I am. I see it in her eyes everyday she comes home from school, now she is noticing what she does not have. She has no trace of her father in her, a father she will never know for he went to prison while she was still in my belly. She is me

twenty years ago, before life began to strip me of any beauty that I may have had. I am, what I pray she does not become. "Mom," her voice calls again. I cannot answer, I just want to fall to my knees sobbing and just hug her. Just tell her everything will be all right. Yet I can do neither, I have no more tears to give and with a check of only two fifty, things will never be all right. A 15 year old pregnant high school dropout is what I was. A 28 year old mother of 3 with no hope, a failure, a loser in the game of life is what I am. I want so much, I want a job, I want a house, I want my family free of this hell. Yet if I get a job I will have to move out of here. That's good many people will say, but move where I say, I have three kids, the cheapest apartments are 350 to 400 dollars a month and the only jobs that I can get pay \$5.00 an hour. Damn it, damn it I want to climb out of this hole. "Mom," my daughter hollers at me. "What's wrong with you," I hear her say as she rushes to her room. I look up at the sound of the door slamming. To see my baby squirming on the couch. My baby of 7 months who is oblivious to the horrors that surround him. I love him, oh how I love him, yet I hate him for he is but an anchor—one more anchor. His father I hope to never see again. After the drug-crazed beatings that he gave me I was more than happy to give him everything of value that I ever owned just to see him go. But I expect to see him any day now since it is almost check time, he'll come begging for crack money, I'll say no, he'll beat me until I give him some. It is always the same. I take the bottle out of my baby's hand as I see the bugs beginning to attack it. I turn and walk towards the window, my kids don't deserve this hell I have forced upon them. Death is what I wish for, death will set me free. But what of my children, my children who I brought in this world, what will happen to them. I must, suffer life for them. "Whaaaa, whaaaa," I hear the baby's cries. "Mom, mom," I hear my daughter's cries. I see my son run to a stranger's car, to make a dope sell. I feel that elusive tear roll down my cheek. I must suffer life, for them I must.



#### HAVE YOU EVER SEEN A GHOST?: A TALE FROM THE OTHER SIDE

In the Dominican Republic, where I'm from, there are many people who would say that spirits and ghosts exist; believe or not if you wish, but this is my story. It happened one hot summer day as I played by myself in my mother's kitchen. A mere child of four, I was occupied with play as many children are at that age. Suddenly like a magnet, I was drawn to look up at the top of the doorway that separated the kitchen from the dining room. What I saw was a sight so frightening that it left me for the moment speechless and frozen. I managed to get a grip of myself. "A man's head," I cried. I had been visited by a spirit that would only show his head. A bodiless head, with eyes that seemed focused on me and yet not really looking at me. There seemed to be a weird familiarity about that head with dark eyes and a round face. It wasn't a monstrous looking face but the face of a man that was no longer from this world. I cried with fear as I ran outside to find my parents, who were sitting under a tree sipping fresh squeezed lemonade and resting under the shade from the scorching summer sun.

I ran as fast as I could, and trembling with fear I explained what I saw. "A man's head," I cried again trying to catch my breath. "Foolish child" is what my mother called me. "You didn't see anything," she said. I looked at my father, hoping that he would come to my aid, but he just looked away, leaving me to the mercy of my mother's arrogant disbelief. I tried once more to explain what I had seen. I described with much detail what I saw. "A man's head," I said, "with eyes that stared right through me as if he had come to see me but didn't know what to say, and so it just stared as if I wasn't there." Tired of my pleading, my mother stood up and annoyed that her rest had been disturbed defiantly took my hand. "You will see," she said, "that there is nothing there. Nothing at all," she exclaimed. I was not convinced. I carefully tracked behind her tracing every footstep, but as I did I wondered was she right; was I just a "foolish child?"

As we entered the kitchen, I hid behind my mother, afraid to look for I might see that thing, that "head" again. Silence filled the room, and then my mother spoke—"See, nothing," she said. With great trepidation, I looked nothing! How could this be; to my disbelief empty space now filled the place where the head had been. I said nothing more about what I had seen for the rest of the day; I was a "foolish child." In the evening, everyone was in for the day, no one spoke a word about what had taken place earlier that day. We all carried out our nightly chores. My mother cleaned in the kitchen. Pots and pans clanked and dished clinked as she put them away. My father read the paper, and I got ready for bed. Then there was a knock on the door, and we all stopped what we were doing. A man entered into our living room. It was my uncle with news that made my

father sad. "Your brother," he told my father, "is dead." At that moment without a word, my father looked at me and remembering the description I had given of the bodiless head he knew. But how could I have known, for you see I never met this particular uncle of mine. And as my father

looked at me, I looked up at the kitchen doorway and back at my father. We didn't say a word, but at that moment we both knew that what I had seen was true.

#### -Melanie Layton



#### TRADITIONS!

December 25th is the date when most Christians celebrate Christmas. It is also the day when most Americans exchange gifts. In the Dominican Republic, however, it is a day for celebration, but it is not a day for gift giving. This special occasion of gift giving is done on the Day of Kings January 6 or as we call it, "El dia de Los Tres Reye Mago." Before this special day, children in the Dominican Republic prepare the day before, on Jan. 5, by going into the fields where a special grass grows called "Ilerva buena" [good grass]. This special grass is gathered by the children and tied into a little bundle with another blade of grass or a string. Just like in America, where children leave cookies and milk for "Santa," children in the Dominican Republic have a special ritual they carry out for this special occasion.

First the grass is gathered and tied; the grass is for the camels to eat. Then the child will fill a glass with water, which he/she will place under his/her bed with a cigarette and a mint. The water is for the wise men [kings] to drink

after their long journey. The cigarette is for the kings to smoke and feel relaxed, and the mint is something sweet to refresh them. The child might also write a special list requesting special toys he/she might want to receive, just like a child in America writes a letter to Santa Claus. Instead of mailing the letter, the child will place it under his/her bed. If the child has been a good boy or girl throughout the year, when the child wakes up on January 6, he/she will find a special toy or two. And to show that the kings were pleased, the child will find that the grass, water, mint, and cigarette will be gone. If the child has not been a good child, the special gifts to the kings will remain under the bed, and there will be no toy or gift of any kind. On January 6, children all over the Dominican Republic can be found making merriment as they enjoy the wonderful gifts given to them by "Los Tres Reve Mago" [the three wise men].

#### -Melanie Layton



# AN OPEN LETTER TO THE WESTERN PEOPLE FROM THEIR MOTHER EAST

My Darling Children!

It's very hard to address you at a distance of thousands of miles. In fact, the distance of measurement is not that big as the distance between our cultures, our societies, our ways of living and our beliefs. But, besides all these distances, my inimate love still feels that you are closer to me. Although, your curiosity took you away from me towards the West, thousands years ago, you are still my children. My love is inspiring me to seek your attention, to let you know about your exploitation by the West, and to give you back your innocence and humanity. Yes, my love is inspiring me to acknowledge you that your life is not to centered around animal desires only, but it's a source to get intimacy and morality.

My dear ones!

You are the descendants of my children. I am trying to reach you for centuries. I witnessed all this "Destruction" in the name of "Construction" in your society. But now it is beyond my patience, AIDS and STD's have trapped you, people are dying of these diseases in every second, and still you do not understand what to do?

Abstinence, Abstinence, and only Abstinence is the way to keep these filthy diseases away from you, to treasure the gift of life, to solve the various problems of society, and to make your old and weak mother happy.

May God bless you, Your Old Mother East.

### My SOUL1

My soul? A broken harmony That goes leaping its madness over the cushion of time.

How they want to place it, acclimate it, recompose it, the mortals to dead time!

Hurling pursuit of the attaineds. Riotous!

The madness of my soul cannot lay down, it lives in restlessness, in disorder, in the imbalance of dynamic things, in the silence of the free thinker, that lives alone, in a silent desert.

Strong broken harmony of my soul; broken at birth; plants today, more than ever, its inborn rebellions in stanchions of strategic leaps.

-Marife Vallecillo

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Translation of Julia de Burgos' (1917-1954) poem *Mi alma*.

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